

Un-Fine by 7CuteCreationImagination7

Series: Five!Verse [4]

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

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Language: English

Characters: Dustin Henderson, Eleven | Jane Hopper, Jim "Chief" Hopper, Jonathan Byers, Joyce Byers, Lucas Sinclair, Maxine "Max" Mayfield, Mike Wheeler, Nancy Wheeler, Steve Harrington, Steve Harrington's Mother, The Party (Stranger Things), Will Byers

Relationships: Jonathan Byers/Nancy Wheeler, Joyce Byers & Steve Harrington, Joyce Byers/Jim "Chief" Hopper

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Summary:

After the events of Five, Steve isn't okay as he seems.

Based on a prompt that asked for PTSD!Steve.

In the Five!Verse

Un-Fine

Author's Note:

Hiya!

This is based in the Five!Verse, so you will probably have to read that to understand this. Sorry.

To all of you reading this, all I can say is thank you. Like, i never expected the story, or this series to get this amount of attention. I love you so much, and if there is anything that I can change to make it better, or for it to be more entertaining, more accurate etc, please tell me.

You all deserve the world. Look after yourselves.

Trigger Warning: PTSD. Paranoia. Nighmares. Fire. Blood.

Lots of Love. God Bless You, from 7CCI7

Steve was *fine*.

One hundred per-cent fine.

And yeah, sure, he did things that weren't normal — but they were *logical*. They were *completely logical*.

So he tore all the lightbulbs out from the ceilings of his house, and replaced them with ones which he dismantled and then put back together. Hopper and Nancy had found bugs in their houses. It was fine.

The rest of it was logical too.

He didn't go near any government officers, purposely avoided people who worked in energy companies (and water companies, and electricity, and gas and — anything to do with public services or science).

It was all perfectly logical.

Because, Hawkins Energy had been a front , so who knew what else the other companies were acting as a front for.

If he went into cold sweats, shivering so hard his teeth chatter whenever the man from the council comes to check the gas meter, that is no ones business. He's fine, it's a cold year.

His grades shoot up, though., despite the strange looks he gets when he checks the blinds in classrooms, which is a bonus.

They makes the teachers fumble for words at the parent's evenings with his mom, when she comes. The Party, and everyone else involved believes that it's all down to him not having to hide his intellect anymore.

(It's the burning *ache* to distract himself from the images of *fire*, and *electric rods*, and *swimming pools* with drops of blood. It's the fact that he doesn't sleep more than four hours a night, because he wakes up screaming, or whimpering, or crying, watching people die *over* and *over again*, so he does homework instead of sleeping.)

So when the Party says that they are staying over at his house for a week, he instantly says yes.

Because they are loud, and they make noise, and they are wonderful distractions. So if the new lightbulbs, and phone sets, and kettle, microwave, oven— any of the electric appliances are bugged, whoever's listening will just get a muffled jumble of voices.

But then his heart sinks. Steve knows he's good at handling sleep deprivation, knows he can go for four hours a night for five days, if he sleeps for twelve straight after. But he can't not sleep for a week. He can't do it when they are all there.

Steve can't be the one dragging them back down into his mess because, he knows, he knows that it's all his fault.

Steve knows that, if he hadn't been born, then Brenner wouldn't have gotten so much funding, so he wouldn't have gotten so much support, so he wouldn't have the money to cover up Kali and El's and Nine's

and Seven's and all the other kidnappings. Then El would be safe with her sane and happy mom, and Barb would still be alive and—He knows.

He knows this because his brain has decided to play this fun list of facts in his brain on a loop. It's a constant drag.

It's like his happiness is being slowly replaced with this list of reasons of ways that he could have changed things, or ways that—

The other reason why is that they can't ask him questions about it.

Dustin told him that Joyce wanted everyone to speak about it, because she had read that speaking is therapeutic.

Steve isn't against that. He wants the kids, and Nancy, and Jonathan, and Hopper and Joyce — all of them, to be happy and mentally sound, so this all looks like a horror story that didn't happen.

The problem is that— the problem is , *he doesn't quite remember all of it.*

Sure, he remembers the glowing ball of energy that was the atomic bomb. He remembers Brenner's men beating him up. He remembers the sticky tunnels, and the way his head hurt after he had a seizure in the cold cell. The images haunt him, he can't go anywhere near fire without blinking to find it extinguished, his hands shaking because he had *extinguished it with his mind, without even thinking .*

And he thought that was okay.

Until, two weeks ago, when El asked him what he saw in the tank when he was taken. He'd opened his mouth, and recalled that yeah, he'd been put in the tank, and something had happened and something —.

Blank.

Nothing.

Steve had shrugged, ruffling the thirteen year-old's hair, and said something about getting her ice cream. They'd probably given him

drugs or something, so he doesn't remember, that is fine. He hates Brenner for messing with his memories, but it is *fine*.

Then Dustin says something, a joke about Billy, and Steve knows that, yeah, Billy did hurt him, didn't he?

He tried to look affronted as he searches to find out what happened with Billy. Steve knows the results, he knows that he ended up with bruises and head injury and all that. But he doesn't remember what Dustin describes, he doesn't know where in the Byers house it happened, judging by the strange looks he gets when he says,

"Yeah. In front of the porch. Mud sucks."

But Steve knows the kids can't take anymore.

He knows this is a dirty secret that he has to keep.

Hopper and Joyce have to deal with El's nightmares, and the weird freeze-ups and "asthma-but-not" attacks that Will has. Nancy and Mike have to keep their home safe, because their parents don't know. Lucas and Max have Billy and Max's dad to worry about. Dustin has the blood stains and a grieving mom. He can't burden them with this — he doesn't even know what it is.

He swings between sad and tired, angry and running around checking lightbulbs and checking in with everyone, and then his mind flashing through memories and nightmares, and occasionally getting rid of memories.

So here he is, sitting in his bedroom, snores and the sounds of shuffling blankets permeating his ears as he sips the scalding, bitter coffee. This is the third night of not sleeping. No one's really noticing, because of the makeup.

He'd gotten weird looks when he had stepped up to buy the concealer, but he needs it. It covers up scars, and eye bags, and bruises. The coffee helps too, five lumps of sugar, four tablespoons of granules, and a bit of chilli powder to wake him up.

That is, until the fourth night. He doesn't do much the whole day, watching the kids play chess with Will's chessboard. Helping Joyce in

the kitchen. Listening to music with Jonathan. It's a good day.

Until he gets to his room, and he is so, so ,so tired. He collapses on his bed, and he falls asleep to the idea that he has to drink something.

Then,

Fire. Well, he's in the tunnels, now, the tentacles, vines — whatever they were, reaching out at him. The black-red-grey fog of fear permeating from the different exits. He looks forward to see El in front of the whirlwind of fire, the bomb laying in front of her. There's blood on her face, running from her nose, eyes and ears. He gasps in horror and tried to run towards her, tried to stretch his arms out at her, but he trips, falls on his side and feels heat. Nancy and Jonathan are sat in front of him, screaming as the Demogorgon tries to kill them, it burns with fire, but it also continues towards them, it goes forwards to get them, hands on their faces, scratching at them and— The vines wrap around his throat, pulling him up to see a swimming pool. Barb, and Dustin, and Six and Four are in there, trying to swim away from the demogorgon, and that means — that means that there are two— and that means that he has to get to them, get to them all, and save them. But the vines are strangling him, the fire is burning his flesh, he can smell blood, and he just wants to, just wants to go and he screams and struggles and screams and screams.

Suddenly, hands are on his shoulders, shaking him and he stares into dark-grey eyes. Steve stares at his hands, and touches his neck, just to make sure. Just to make sure that the vines are gone, and that his hands are scarred over, and not burnt.

He tries to get up, try is the word, because his body doesn't co-operate, his body just won't move. Someone is shouting, it might be his name, but he can't hear. One voice, a child's voice, strong and scared, high pitched, breaks through the cotton in his mind.

"Breathe!"

He frowns, he thinks, and then he does what she says. Steve's eyebrows furrow at the way he gasps, his lungs greedy for air.

Oh.

He must have forgotten. Steve feels like something has happened, but he just lets his eyes slide back closed, not even feeling his body slump.

He isn't sure if he's going to sleep or passing out.

He hasn't the energy to care.

The next day he wakes up slowly.

The teenager blinks confusedly at the bed. The duvet isn't half on the floor, and all the pillows are nested around his head. It looks like someone tucked him in. Steve gets up, and looks at his reflection in the mirror, the bathroom door half-open, just incase.

The eye-bags are less prominent, but his eyes have reddish rims, and he has a pallor to his face that doesn't look too healthy. Steve looks at the concealer and sighs. It won't be enough. The boy showers, pulls on some clothes, and , after swallowing the medication for seizures, pain, and another bunch of pills which he isn't quite sure what they're for, he walks downstairs.

He steps down, and all of the people freeze. He freezes too and looks behind him, preparing himself to fling something into the wall, preparing to fight again and— Oh.

Nothing.

They're all looking at him.

Steve smiles, and after giving a faux salute, he says, "Hi."

His voice comes out gravelly, like he had screamed himself hoarse, or had a terrible case of strep throat. Steve doesn't know why, but he knows he needs to fight off an infection, he needs Vitamin C.

He shakes his head, and tries to clear his throat, and reaches for the

orange juice. He pours the glass, and ignores the indecipherable fog of emotions which hangs in the air. Everyone is looking at him oddly.

Some, like Dustin, Hopper, Joyce and El look tired, and knowing. The type of looks his teachers gave him when he gave excuses for his fake parents at the parent-teacher conferences. The look of disappointment, concern and knowing.

Nancy, Jonathan and the rest of the kids look like they're in front of a wounded baby deer, like they want to approach, but he will run off. Steve drains the glass of juice, and then looks at Hopper.

He's an adult— one with a responsible job at that— and expects him to answer his question.

“ Why are you all acting... strange?”

His voice still sounds awful. Steve reaches for the cough drops as Joyce clears her throat, and puts her hand on his arm.

“Steve, sweetie, do you remember what happened last night?”

“Um, if this is about El nearly setting breaking her arm, that wasn't my fault. Wheeler, you were the one that wanted to teach everyone to be ninjas.”

Mike doesn't even look affronted. They are all looking increasingly concerned.

This concerns him because *what did he do?*

“Steve” and this time, Dustin is speaking, his voice high pitched and frail, like a wire stretched too taught.

“ Do you remember what happened after we all went to bed?”

He frowns, and then it comes back, fire, fire everywhere, Barb and Six and Four in the swimming pool, El next to the bomb, Jonathan and Nancy being killed and—

It appears that he lost some time, because he surfaces from the horrific mixture of memories and his imagination's tricks, on his couch. Max is pressing ice to his hand, it isn't bruised, but it keeps the feeling of flames burning his skin away.

Mike steps into his vision, and then seems to approve, because he sits right onto him, and begins to ask him questions.

Steve knows he should lie, but he is so, so, so tired of this, of it all. He wishes he had the energy to makeup a fake, funny nightmare, or to run out of the house, but he doesn't. So he nods when Mike asks him questions about nightmares, and flashbacks.

Max hugs him, El leans on his side, and Dustin and Mike share his lap. Someone is stroking his hair, and someone else is playing soft music. He closes his eyes, and lets himself drift off. But this time, strange things happen.

When he is being chased by men with guns, or he feels the flames licking up on his hands, or he sees the demodogs, he hears soft voices scaring the monsters away.

Gentle hands on his shoulders pull him away from the men.

The weight of something heavy and warm on his chest confuses the demodogs which are ripping him to pieces.

He sinks back into the soft and murky darkness, and feels warm and content.

Steve wakes up, and Nancy is there with Jonathan. The younger boy hands his a glass of water, the girl clasps her hands together.

" Steve, we know you're going to college soon. But before you go, we want you to talk to this lady. She has helped Will, and she might be able to help you... feel better. The government will foot the bill."

Steve nods, rubbing his neck, the tips of his ears flushing in embarrassment.

He receives two hugs.

The kids then come in, and as they cling to him, it is like one massive seven person hug. Steve receives more hugs, more gentle touches, more reassurances and softly spoken words in the space of two days than he has ever had in his life.

They are patient when he gets frustrated and paranoid, snapping and irritable.

They understand when he doesn't do anything but lie on the couch, or when he doesn't sleep for days.

He has people who he can call if the nightmares get too bad.

A week later, he finds himself with Joyce, parked at the gates of a large, tall building. She kisses him on the cheek, and unlocks the car. Steve walks in, knowing that this is a step towards normal.

This is the first step on the metaphorical tightrope. But he isn't scared.

Because he knows he has people waiting to catch him if he falls.

Author's Note:

To anyone who is struggling with mental health issues: take care of yourself. I know taking a shower, going outside, drinking water and eating food won't fix the problem. But do basic self care. Do little things that make the darker days brighter. The fog of darkness, the weight on your mind can suck, but you can pull through, like the bad*** warriors that you are. You are all worthy of love and care. Get help. Don't suffer alone.

To everyone that has read this. I love you. I seriously love you. You are all wonderful people that deserve the world. I hope this is accurate, because this is really just based on a tad of internet surfing, so, like if anyone finds this wildly innacurate, please comment so I can change it.. I have no clue if this is really correct.

Look after yourselves, and I hope I fulfilled this

prompt.

Love, best wishes and hugs from 7CCI7